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Can LSPs, freelancers and buyers live happily ever after?

Once upon a time, in the land of interpreting, there were three cities. The city of LSPs had accountants, investors, and project managers. The city of freelancers had coffee, travel and bookings. The city of buyers had procurement procedures, cost-benefit analyses, and meetings. Can they find a way to get along?

Beyond the fairy tale, many in the interpreting sector are aware of the real tensions. Buyers, especially government buyers, want lower budgets for the same or better service. LSPs need to turn a profit and interpreters are looking to increase their rates. Things have only become worse with remote interpreting. Now, at least in theory, any interpreter with the right language combination can take on any assignment. That's before we even discuss machine interpreting, inequalities in the qualifications available in different languages and the ongoing tensions around language brokering. The addition of standards and attempts at adjusting how interpreting is delivered after the pandemic have done little to make life more peaceful.

This talk will suggest that there is a path to peace. Based on real-life experience and recent research, I will argue that partnership, creativity with technology, and honesty provide the basis for a future where everyone in the interpreting sector can play their part. When we create spaces for all our voices to be heard, have honest conversations about which technologies to use when, and admit our fears and agendas we can make a difference together.